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Dianne Wampler 08/17/2006 06:21:21 PM From DB/Inbox: Dianne Wampler

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Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 04804

SIPDIS
CX:

ACTION: POL
INFO: PMA ECON AMB RAO FCS PA DCM MGT DAO CONS TSR

DISSEMINATION: POL /1
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:RWILSON
DRAFTED: AMB:RWILSON
CLEARED: NONE

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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8032
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 0832
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0716
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 0465
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0326
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1118
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1740

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004804

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/17/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY TO DECIDE ON UNIFIL PARTICIPATION AFTER
AUGUST 20

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Turkey will move toward a government decision to approve a Lebanon deployment during the week of August 21, following FM Gul's consultations in Israel on Sunday, according to MFA DG for the Middle East Bozkurt Aran. However, Aran told Ambassador on August 17 that this decision will definitely require parliamentary approval. Gul got strong encouragement to participate in the expanded UNIFIL from PM Siniora. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Aran debriefed on Gul's August 16 visit to Beirut, where he saw Siniora, Parliamentary Speaker Nabih Berri, the foreign minister and Saad Hariri, as well as visiting foreign and deputy foreign ministers of France, Malaysia, Pakistan, Senegal and Qatar. Gul was reportedly struck by how calm and confident Siniora appeared. On Hezbollah, Siniora reportedly said that the organization will give the appearance of withdrawing from the south. It had been agreed that there will be no firing of weapons or carrying of weapons, and fighters will go back to more civilian pursuits. Neither the LAF nor UNIFIL would go very far searching for weaponry, but anyone caught carrying arms in the south would be arrested and their arms confiscated.

¶3. (C) Regarding the other meetings, Aran said that Nabih Berri took a strongly anti-Israeli and anti-US tone. Hariri fingered Syria and especially Iran as the real forces behind Hezbollah. He predicted to Gul that the August 22 due date Iran set for itself on the nuclear issue will be a pivot point in the region and in Lebanon.

¶4. (C) Aran said Gul's party visited southern Beirut. While obviously struck by the immense destruction there, Aran said everyone noted that people did not appear sad, hopeless or downcast. Gul was greeted by smiling people wherever he went, and this forward-looking optimism apparently impressed the Turks. Aran added that Hezbollah and Nasrallah appear to be very strong. He said there no meetings with Hezbollah figures.

¶5. (C) In Israel, Gul will meet with PM Olmert, FM Livni and the defense minister, according to both Aran and the Israeli ambassador here. Gul will also travel to Ramallah to meet with Abu Mazen, but both the Israeli and Aran said there will be no contacts with Hamas. The Israeli ambassador said that Gul's visit has two purposes. First, to understand how Israel views the expanded UNIFIL and the conditions under which it will operate as part of moving toward a decision on Turkish participation. Second, to dispel concerns in Israel and in the US Congress about anti-Semitism in Turkey, which spiked at the height of the Lebanon air campaign.

¶6. (C) Regarding the UNIFIL expansion, Aran said that the government will meet early next week to review the results of Gul's visit to Beirut, his Sunday visit to Israel, and the UNIFIL Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) meeting Thursday in New York. He said that both PM Erdogan and FM Gul intend for Turkey to be in UNIFIL, and he expected a decision to participate will come soon.

¶7. (C) Aran had asked Gul personally whether parliamentary approval will be necessary; Gul reportedly replied yes and added that it should not be a problem. Questions would arise on two fronts: (a) why is Turkey sending forces abroad when it can't protect Turks at home from PKK terrorist violence and (b) won't intercession in southern Lebanon just free up Israeli forces to carry out actions in Gaza. Aran repeated what others have said about the importance of progress on the PKK and restarting some kind of engagement on the Israel-Palestine front to rebut these criticisms. Various figures here also highlight the importance of diversity in the expanded UNIFIL, including the presence of various Islamic countries from different parts of the world.

¶8. (C) Ambassador commended FM Gul's careful approach on UNIFIL participation, which also included reaching out to the opposition leader in parliament before going to Beirut. He said that the US hopes to see strong and effective Turkish participation in the expanded UNIFIL. Referring to comments made when Counselor Zelikow was here in late July about Turkey's desire for a say in decisions about the force, Ambassador observed that those countries which commit earliest and with the largest forces will have the greatest say as details are worked out.

¶9. (C) Ambassador also reiterated the US concerns about Iranian overflights of Turkish territory that we have expressed many times. Aran responded that Turkey is vigilant, will continue to be so, and will continue to respond to US concerns on the matter.

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WILSON